

Curious Black Letter Book

page

An exhortacyon made to Relygvous sisters in the tyme of theyr consecracyon by the Reuerende fader in god Johan Alcock byshop of Ely.

Aske the banes betwix the hyghe and moost myghty pryncce kyng of all kynges lone of almygh ty god and the virgyn Mary in humanyte Cryste Jesu of Nazareth of the one partye. And A. B. of the thother partye that yf any may or woman can shewe any lawfull Impedymnt other by any precontracte made or corrupcyon of body or soule of the sayd A. B. that she ought not to be marryed this daye vnto the sayd myghty pryncce Jesu that they wolde accordynge vnto the lawe shewe it.



God sister we are here gadred befo re almygh ty god and all his sayn tes in heuyn in his churche here mys spous to solempne this noble spou sage bptwene the sayd lone of als myghty god and you/whiche spou sage must be of your partye desyred with all your holt hette and free wyll not compelled by none of your frendes nor for cause of worldly worthyp nor ease of your body but oonly for the lone & seruyce ye owe to the sayd myghty pryncce to serue hym & obeye hym & hepe his comāndementes and all o ther meyn & worldly worthyp renounce and forsake

A. ii



45. A. 65.  
Ms. L. B. S.

and hym to loue aboue all thyng / & his preceptes  
to performe and all other thyng to do that perty-  
neth to a good wyf. How moche be ye boude vnto  
hym that wyll consent that ye be maryed vnto hy  
to grete a pryncce & almyghty / & ye a wretche his  
creature & of a poore lynage. for the comon vlage  
is kynges to mary togyder. Dulkes and Erles to-  
gyder and poore people togyder and leldome seey  
the ryche and the poore mary togyder and yet this  
moost myghty pryncce lorde of heuen & of erthe for  
the loue he bereth vnto you to make you his quene  
his fact of heuen to be your fader his moder to be  
yours / & so by this maryage all your kynred shall  
be of colynage by affynyte to the fad of heuen our  
lady all the angels with all the hole Genealogy of  
Crist to whiche honour and excellence no carnall  
spoulsage coude exalte you. Therefore yf ye conty-  
nue his faythfull & true spoule comyttynge your  
mynde your wyll & all your werkes to obseue his  
comāndementes your rewarde shall be as in your  
Joynter & dowery excede all rewarde that can be  
thought and may be gyuen vnto man.

**H**er sister yf ye wyll be spoused to this no-  
ble pryncce & so be determyned in your myn-  
de. I saye thyle wordes to you of the holy ghoost.  
*(Audi filia et vide + inclina aurem tuā et obliuiscere populum tuū et domū patris tui)* That is to

laye / doughter here see and gyue humble atten-  
 daunce / yf ye wyll be spoused to this myghty pryn-  
 ce / ye must forgyte and relynquyſſhe Joye and fe-  
 lycyte of this worlde / and the houle of all your ge-  
 neracyon / your fader and moder and all your car-  
 nall frendes / and ye muste folowe hym in condys-  
 cyons / and leue your olde name and condycyons  
 and to be called after his name / his name is Je-  
 sus Nazarenus. And soo ye muste be called Naza-  
 rena. It is wyſen Nazarei candidores niue in-  
 terpretantur virgulti del flondi siue custodientes  
 aut separati a mundo del vincti siue sancti aut con-  
 secrati That is to laye. Ye muste be as a yonge  
 grene braunche and as a floure and as a keper of  
 the tresour of your husbonde and seuered from the  
 worlde as anoynted holy and consecrate quene /  
 for thyle propertees amonge other haſſy your spou-  
 se. fyrſt ye muste be as a yonge grene braunche /  
 the whiche loſeth his fayre beaute whan he is se-  
 uered from the roſe. The roſe of all Relygion is  
 Jesu of Nazareth that is charyte (Quia deus ca-  
 ritas est) And who ſo euer is not in charyte he de-  
 parteth hymſelfe from almyghty god. Soo ye  
 muste loue your spoule Jesu above all thyng / he  
 muste be in your mynde / in your soule / in your her-  
 te / and in all your werkes. And of hym ſpecially  
 ye muste ſpeke / for yf ye haue ony pleasure for to  
 ſpeke of ony other thynges of the worlde or of ony

other man than wyll be be wrothe. for as Saynt  
Gregory sayth (Quidēdū ergo nobis est quia  
intueri non debet quod nō licet concupisci. Et iohannes)  
Criste sayth (Qui stndet elegantes faci  
es inspicere. ipse foinacem passionis accendit) for  
he wyll that ye kepe oonly and entyely vnto hym  
your fyue wyttes / to haue noo pleasure for to lo  
ke vpon may or woman / nor to here of noo woil  
dely thynges / nor speke of noo concupyscence / nor  
handell noo contagious thynges / but oonly that  
shall be to his pleasure and scrupce. for as saynt  
Jerom sayth . There was neuer man soo Jelous  
of his wyf and taketh hede of his werkies and de  
des as our lorde your spouse wyll take hede of you  
for ye can thynke no thought but he knoweth it /  
nor speke no worde but he hereth it / nor be in noo  
place but he is there ptesente / nor noo thyng can  
dysceyue hym / therfore ye muste loue hym aboue  
all thyng and be in partyte charyte with all your  
sytters and his people and seruauntes. Also Crist  
Jesu is called (Flos campi) The floure of Na  
zareth / the beaute of this exceedeth all other vertues  
& it is soo noble a tresour that it can not be pray  
sed / and therfore virgynyte is honoured in al  
myghty god . And Criste the heed and the leder  
therof . and the fyrst thyng that he dyde in erthe  
whan he became man he sette vp his husholde of  
virgyns & meny of chastyte for to serue hym and

his churche here in erthe / as he was by virgyns / the  
 angels serued in heuen / his moder was and is per  
 petuall virgyne . Johan Euangelyste his secre  
 tary a virgyne . Johan the Baptyst a virgyne . Je  
 remy the prophete a virgyne / and angelles in he  
 uen virgyns & Innumerable there syngynge and  
 folowynge the lombe of god the seconde persone /  
 and neuer newe songes of Joye and gloire . The  
 angels of heuen honourch virgyns as theyr bres  
 thers & systers . And as it is wyten (Apocal. xix.)  
 The angell of god wolde not lustre saynt Johan  
 Euangelyste to worshyppe hym for loue he was a  
 virgyne as he was and angell & may of the erthe  
 And therfore Saynt Bernarde sayth . What is  
 more full of beaute than is chastyte (Quid casti  
 tate decorius . Que mundum de immundo cons  
 ceptum semine de hoste domesticū de homine an  
 gelum facit) The angels worshypped saynt Ag  
 nes and cladde her in a garment of chastyte / crow  
 ned saynt Cecylie / saynt Agas shewed her holy  
 nesse / saynt Beatheryne buried / & deliuered from  
 deeth Susanne . And as it is wyten Numery . xxi.  
 (Omnes feminas virgines reseruare alias ones  
 iubentur interfici) That is to saye . That where  
 all the people sholde be destroyed and slayne for  
 synne / yet god almyghty commaunded to spare  
 virgyns . And therfor sayth saynt Anselme (Non  
 est salus nisi quē tu virgo peperisti) Saynt Mar

garete hadde the deuyl vnder her feet and bouns  
de hym and he cryed & sayd leue ye ponge may  
de ye destroye me. And in lyke wyse Saynt Ju  
lyan sette hym and put hym to grete rebuke and  
therfore the deuyl worshypped virgynyte as it is  
radde in Thobye the sixte chapytre. for ryghte as  
the deuyl hath power of all vncleue lyuers ryghte  
soo he honoureth virgyns and feareth them by  
cause of the angelles. And therfore Saynt Johan  
Crysostomus sayth (Castitas est res angelica p  
quam solum singulariter homines angelis assi  
mulantur) And that angels haue in heuen by fel  
tycyte. A man or a woman beyng thet in virgyn  
yte haue by grace and by grete labour. Virgynys  
te by grace hath dyuerse preuileges. fyrste it res  
plenyssheth paradysse (tricesimalsecunda questione  
prima ca. Nupcie) The seconde that virgynyte is  
a vertue that may only may please god with sayth  
(in aug. de leuo. s. Scimus colla. iij. the. iij.) It is  
the begynnynge of other vertues (In aug. quomodo  
op. epi. s. neq; autem sacras. the. iij.) That only  
amonge wyfemen a virgyn is to be consecrate. xxb.  
di. Sicutius. the. v.) Virgyns martyrs and thre  
other and hath (Aureolam tricesimalsecunda que  
stione quinta. Si paulus) for as matrimony res  
plenysshed the erthe with childern ryghte so a vir  
gyne replenysshed paradysse (tricesimalsecunda que  
stione. i. Nupcie) Moders of childern of the worlde

hath grete belynes and sorowe for to bynge forth  
 theyr childern / a virgyn is in quyetnesse and byrn-  
 geth forth her childern in grete Joye as it is wy-  
 ten (Machei .xij. Que parate erant intrauerunt  
 cum eo ad nupcias) And as it is wyten (Lanti-  
 cor secundo . Sicut liliū inter spinas sic amica  
 mea inter filias) Virgynye is lykened vnto a lily  
 the leups of the lily that conserued the beaute ther  
 of is sobrenesse of mete and dynke / the contrarpe  
 therof is shewed in Loth beyng dionken fylled his  
 owne doughters (Genes decimonono .xv.q.i.  
 Inebriauerunt) Jeronimus (Virgo vinum fu-  
 giat pro veneno) As who sayth / a virgyn sholde  
 hate wyne as venym.

#### **Custos.**

**A**lso ye must be a custos / a keeper of all su-  
 che thynges as this daye shall be deliuered  
 vnto you in the name of your spouse & folowe hys  
 therin . for and ye kepe not all thynges in theyr  
 beyng as he hath made theym / they sholde forth-  
 with be destroyed / and therof Dauid sayth (Ni-  
 si dominus custodierit ciuitatem etc.) So ye must  
 kepe the tresour of your spouse Criste pertynyng  
 ge to his sayth & to haue in your remembraunce &  
 wpll to kepe the foure thynges that shall be deli-  
 uered vnto you this daye / your deyle & your wantell  
 both beyng of blake & a ryng w<sup>th</sup> a lyght of ware  
 beryng in your honde / and in keepyng of thyle it



shalbe shewed as ye loue your husbonde. This deyle  
le and mantell remembred ryght well the virgyn  
saynt Agnes whan she sayd (*Voluit signū in fa-  
ciem meā et nullū amatoīe preter eum admittā*)  
That is to saye. he hath couerid my soule Inwar-  
de and myn heed with a deyle. that and yf I wyll  
loue ony man better than hym I shall goo to the  
colour of my deyle and that is euerlastynge deeth.  
In lyke wyse she shewed that her spoule Cryste  
Jesu had Indued her w a garment all sette with  
precious stones. that is to saye. with charyte. fayth  
hope. humylyte. obedyens. abstynence. & prayer. &  
Inboudred all chyle fayr vertues in the blake gar-  
mente of her body and soule here knytted togyder.  
whiche may euery vertuous persone dayly vse and  
encrease to his rewarde by grace and free wyl that  
be gauen vnto hym yf he wyll seke therfore. And  
therefore the sayd saynt Agnes songe & sayd to all  
virgynes (*Induit me dñs ciclade auro detecta*)  
(*Anulū*) Also I haue by the auctoryte gauen vn-  
to me by Cryst Jesu to deliuer vnto you this daye  
a ryng in token of maryage Indysolpble to be  
made betwix you & hym. for as saynt Poule sayeth  
Ye must hereafter remembre no thyng but that is  
godly. & therefore the sayd saynt Agnes cryed with  
a grete voyce agaynst the deuyl & hym that temp-  
ted her to vncleynly desyres sayenge (*Uilcite a me  
pabulum mortis. quia ab aliū amatoīe puenita*



sum) And shewed vnto hym and vnto all the peo-  
ple with a mery voyce. *Anulo suo subornauit me  
dominus noster Iesus cristus et tanq̃ sponsam des-  
corauit me corona* That is to saye. All the plea-  
sures and temptacyōs of the worlde departe from  
me/for our loude Iesu Cryste with his rynge hath  
wedde me and hath crowned me with a crowne of  
euerlastyng Joye yf I kepe truly my loue & spou-  
sage vnto hym.

### Comen.

**A**lso remember the lyght þe hyngre with  
you that sygnespeth Cryste Iesu. That is  
*Vera lux que illuminat omnem hominē venien-  
tem in hunc mundum* Whos sayth by his churche  
taughte you ye must entyrelly kepe & see your lyght  
go not out but be breunnyng in your soule and in  
your mynde by the blessed Incarnacōn/passyon/re-  
surreccōn/and the moost blessed lpf of our sauy-  
our Cryste Iesu/and that ye falle in none earthely  
synne/herelye nor ciuils by ony mānes techyng  
nor dyspute not the rules of your relygion/but w  
all reuerence and obedyence that ye may do ye fol-  
lowe theym/obeye theym/& obserue them. And what  
soeuer your abbess or the rulers of your relygion  
commaunde you to do/obeye it is for the helth of  
your soule and accordyng to your relygion/and  
honour and loue theym as your fader and moder  
ye muste be pacient amonge your systers & suffre

theym/ye muste be meke/ye muste ete and drynke  
suche meates and drynkes as ye be comaunded/and  
whan ye haue not half slept ynough ye must ryle/  
ye must synge in your course and ordie with your  
systers/and take no hede though your voyce be not  
moost swetest and clere/so ye haue a swete deuoti-  
cyon/ye must serue your sisters and wasche theyr  
feet/for Cryste Jelu to whome ye shall be sponised  
vnto was obedyent to his fader and suffred deeth/  
and he god and man wasshed also the feet of his  
discyples poore sylthers.

#### Nazarena.

**A**lso ye must be Nazarena/that is to saye/  
deseyered from the worlde/as Jelu Naza-  
renus sayth hymself *Regnū meū non est in hoc  
mūdo* But though your body be here in this worl-  
de corporally/your mynde & your soule to be with  
Cryste Jelu/and so take the worlde in all thyng  
therin and laye with Saynt poule. The worlde  
is to me a payne/and I to the worlde my Ioye is  
oonly in Cryste crucifyed. So sister your pleasure  
and conuertiacyon muste oonly be in the crosse of  
Cryste/that is penaunce/in fastyng/prayer/and  
mortyfycacyon of your enemy the fleshe and let it  
not haue his wyll/kepe you withyn your monastie/  
rye and departe not thertro (*.xvi. q. i. placuit. n.*)  
for ryght as a sylthe depeth that is without water  
Ryght soo a man or woman of Relygyon beyng

without theyr cloyster is deed in theyr soules. Remember the Roip of the bybell that Dena Jacobs daughter the wolde not kepe her within not close as she was comanded but wolde go forth amonge yonge people and soo was corrupte and rauylshed and therof folowed Infemyte manslaughter & murder. Moyses beyng in monte of Relyggyon he spake with god without he spake but with man (xxxvi. di. c.) So A woman of Relyggyon or a man beyng in theyr cloyster in prayer they speke with god without they speke with the deuyll & therfor an holy fader sayd tpyght as an henne þ hath egges leureth her egges shall of them neuer come chelrens So shall none be good Relyggyous man or woman that leureth the place of Relyggyon. And as it is rad in (Wittis patra) Ther was a monke by longe spa ce tempted by the deuyll & he resysted hym sore at the last he brought the monke to the doore where he sholde departe from the place of Relyggyon he made there a crosse and cryed to the deuyll thou hast pulled me hyder. pulle me now ferder & thou canst but it shall neuer lye in thy power.

**Uncta.**

**A**lso remember ye be anoynted in your Day  
tyme & confirmacyon and now to be made  
perfyte Nazarens Christ wof of Nazareth ye shall  
be sanctified & consecrate & in your name to be put  
in the grete balender amonge the virgyns & spous-

2.1.

les of Cryst Jesu in heuen (Iesus nazareus was  
unctus olco leticie p<sup>r</sup> oibz patibz suis) And that  
gyuen vnto his manhode to anoynte with vertue &  
grace in this present lyf & with euerlastyng Joye  
his louers & seruautes / & therfor saynt John Bap-  
tyst sayth (Nos oēs recipim<sup>9</sup> grāz in plenitudine  
eius) No thyng we haue suffyrent of our self but  
all cometh of his grace / & therfore yf ye wyl be as  
noynted with this noble oyle of mercy & grace in  
this present lyf & to come to be anoynted in euerla-  
styng Joye. Ye must do that was comaūded in the  
gospell by the wyle maydens þ̄ holde be spoused  
vnto Cryst sayenge (Ite et emite oleū) So & les-  
he vnto ye may by & haue this oyle of grace / & ther-  
for the noble lady sayd to all her gentyl wōmen as  
it is wyrtē in the boke of all songes (In odore  
unguentoz tuoz currim<sup>9</sup>) That is to saye ryght  
as an hōūde þ̄ hath founde blood or percyng of a  
best stryken & seketh & celsch not tyll he fynde it.  
So our sauour Cryste Jesu was wounded & losse  
blood & percyd of his bleſſyd lyf in this world. to  
euery man to tast & folowe it tyll he fynde h̄. Ye  
shall not syſter nede to seke ferre tyll ye fynde per-  
cyd & sauour / as Dauid sayth (Sicut ceru<sup>9</sup> ad fo-  
tes aquar) Of this swete oynement of Cryst for  
he sayth by his prophete Dauid (Drope est dñs  
oibz inuocantibz eū) he is redy to euery body whay  
he is called vpon. Example therof. Mary magdaz

leyn she brought with her ornemēt of deuocion  
& sought hym & therfore soone she founde hym. So  
it is your dewte to seke Cryste Jesu to whome ye  
shall wedde nother at Nazareth Bedlem nor Je  
rusalem but ye shall fynde hym here within your  
owne churche the same god and man Cryste Jesu  
and for your very loue & contemplacō go to an  
awter within your churche or to an ymage of our  
lady where Gabryell saluted her. Remembre the  
mercy & the loue that the fader of heuen bare to  
all mankynde sente his angell to a yonge mayde.  
and of her cleue blood of virgynite god and man  
was joynded togyder. Than go to an other awter  
or place that sheweth the Natyuite of Cryst and  
how that he lyeth in grete pouerte in haye & betwix  
two bestes & had no comfōrt but this yonge may  
de his moder to be fedde of her brest. And soo for  
to go to other places within your churche for your  
deuocō & remembrañce of his passyō. And spee  
ally one. twyes or thryes of the daye that ye seke  
hym in your mynde deuoutely at the moūt of Cal  
uarie. That is that ye shall knele befor the crucy  
fixe where his ymage is made remembryng how  
he god & man that neuer had offendid but tooke  
mannes nature here for the grete loue & redemp  
ōn therof & put vnto so paynfull and shamefull  
deeth in the myddes of the worlde his mod beynge  
presēt his hondes & his feet nayled vnto the tre.

his herte stryken thugh/and yet in all this payne  
his charyte was so moche that he prayed vnto his  
fader of heuen to forgiue all them þe so vpolently  
& so wrongfully put hym to deeth/ and despyred of  
his fader that all mankynde sholde be forgiuen of  
theyr trespasses/for the offence of our fyrst foumed  
fader Adam & the gates of heuen to be opened to  
all them that wolde byleue in hym. And in lyke wy  
se to remembre some deuoute place of his Resur  
rection & blessyd Ascension/ & how he shall come  
to make an ende of this present worlde & deme it.  
(Ouer igne) And calle you & all mankynde to ac  
counte of theyr demeanour concernynge his sayth.  
& of your how ye haue kepte your spousage & pro  
mised vnto hym. And yf ye lytler wel & Juste  
ly & truly obserue your name that ye shall be cal  
led by after your husbonde/as Nazarena/that is  
to saye (virgult) fayre brāches full of fruytes of  
vertue in your Relygion & floures of virgynyte &  
keeper of cōmaūdementes of your spouse/despysyn  
ge pleasures & pompe of the worlde/leuyng it vn  
to the folyllhe maydens of the worlde/ & anoynte  
your soule by holy lyuyng / & so be (Sancta) as  
Crist is (Sanctus) & consecrate your soule to al  
myghty god/sayenge vnto hym w the holy may  
de & martyr saynt Agnes and saynt Eudye (Ni  
hil in terris desidero preter te) I desyre nothyng  
in this present lyf but the Jesu to be my keeper &

defender/ & to haue the pryncypally in my mynde  
& thought/ and thay doubte ye no chyngc systers/  
but it shall be sayd vnto you & euerychone of you.  
(Unquentū effusū nomen tuū ideo adoleſcentile  
dilexerunt te nimis) The angels of heuen beyngc  
chyle fayr yonge maydens & gentyl wſmen. for ye  
bere the name of Nazareth that is theyr maker &  
lorde wyl make Inſcripte myrthe & defende & kee  
pe your perſone. & not departe from tyll they ſynge  
this ſonge mooſt bleſſyd that may be layd vnto you  
(Veni ſponſa xpi accipe coronā quā tibi pparauit  
in eternū) That is to ſaye come mayde Nazarene  
Chriſtis ſpouſe to preſent & receyue for thy rewarde  
de the ſpecyall crowne of glory called (Auriola)  
that I wyl not gyue nor rewarde with/ but my ſpe  
cyall louers martyrs virgyns & prechers/ & that ye  
may ſo do here ſe ye may receyue this noble crowne  
I beſeche almyghty god for his grete mercy Amen.

¶ Here endeth an exhortacyon made  
to Relygyous ſysters in the tyme  
of theyr conſecracyn by the Reues  
rende fader in god Johan Alcock  
byſhop of Ely. ¶ Enprynted at  
weſtmynſtre by Wynken de worde





